

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 8209

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, TU

SUBJ: JUSTICE PARTY NATIONAL CONGRESS

1. JUSTICE PARTY (JP), TURKEY'S SECOND LARGEST PARTY IN TERMS OF LOWER HOUSE SEATS AND NUMBER ONE IN SENATE STRENGTH, WILL HOLD BIENNIAL NATIONAL CONGRESS OCTOBER 21 MOST SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS WILL BE ELECTION OF PARTY CHAIRMAN, ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD, AND COUNCIL OF REPRESENTATIVES.

2. INDICATIONS ARE THAT AT THIS CONGRESS PARTY CHAIRMAN SULEYMAN DEMIREL (PRIMIN 1965-71) WILL FACE STRONGEST CHALLENGE SINCE HE FIRST ELECTED CHAIRMAN TEN YEARS AGO. JP'S POOR PERFORMANCE IN 1973 ELECTIONS, IN WHICH IT WON ONLY 149 OF 450 SEATS IN LOWER HOUSE WHERE FOR EIGHT YEARS I HAD HELD MAJORITY, HAS STIMULATED STRONG CRITICISM OF DEMIREL FROM WITHIN PARTY RANKS. TWO CHALLENGERS, FORMER FINMIN ORHAN OGUZ AND UNAT DEMIR, HAVE ANNOUNCED CANDIDACIES FOR CHAIRMANSHIP AND HAVE BEEN CAMPAIGNING AGAINST DEMIREL AT PROVINCIAL CONGRESS. SENATOR KAMURAN INAN, WITHOUT DECLARING HIMSELF A CANDIDATE, HAS STATED PUBLICLY HIS WILLING-
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NESS TO SERVE AS CHAIRMAN. ALSO, NAMES OF ENATE

PRESIDENT TEKIN ARIBURUN, PROF. NEVZAT YALCINTAS, AND SABIT OSMAN AVCI HAVE APPEARED IN PRESS AS POTENTIAL CANDIDATES. A FAR-RIGHT JP DEPUTY AND BUSINESSMAN, MURAT BAYRAK, WHILE NOT HIMSELF A CANDIDATE, HAS SPOKEN OUT VIGOROUSLY AGAINST DEMIREL'S LEADERSHIP AND MAY BE PROVIDING SOME FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO EFFORT TO UNSEAT DEMIREL.

3. HOWEVER, BASED ON RESULTS OF PROVINCIAL CONGRESSES WHICH HAVE JUST BEEN HELD, WELL-PLACED JP SOURCES ARE CONFIDENT THAT DEMIREL WILL RETAIN CHAIRMANSHIP. ALI IHSAN BALIM, A PARTICULARLY CLOSE PERSONAL FRIEND OF DEMIREL TOLD POL CONUS OCTOBER 15 THAT HE EXPECTED DEMIREL TO WIN 65-70 PER CENT OF VOTES AT CONGRESS. SIMILAR CONFIDENCE THAT DEMIREL WOULD WIN, ALBEIT WITH MUCH LESS THAN NEAR-UNANIMOUS SUPPORT HE ONCE COMMANDED, HAS BEEN EXPRESSED TO EMBOFFS BY KONYA AND NEVSEHIR JP PROVINCIAL CHAIRMEN AND BY VICE PRESIDENT OF SENATE, AND TO ISTANBUL CONGENOFF BY ISTANBUL JP PROVINCIAL CHAIRMAN.

4. ASSUMING THAT THESE PREDICTIONS HOLD TRUE, DEMIREL AFTER CONGRESS SHOULD HAVE FRESH THOUGH SOMEWHAT WEAKENED MANDATE WITH WHICH TO NEGOTIATE WITH ACTING PRIME MINISTER ECEVIT ON POSSIBLE FORMULA FOR RESOLVING GOVERNMENT CRISIS.
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